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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Thursday, September 22, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FLOOR COVERINGS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Homemakers, you may remember that I talked some weeks ago about hardwood floors and their finishes, and how to take care of them, and I remarked that floor coverings would naturally be the next number on our program. This seems to be an appropriate time to keep my promise, what with fall housecleaning and perhaps a new scheme of furniture arrangement for the coming winter.

The information I have gathered is chiefly from Bess M. Viemont, of the Bureau of Home Economics in the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Miss Viemont is the author of various helpful bulletins such as those on window curtaining and making slip covers; some day, perhaps she'll write one on rugs, but in the meantime, here are some of her ideas.

"Of course few floors are completely carpeted these days," she says, "except possibly some of the very modernistic rooms where absolute plainness and an unbroken line from wall to wall are achieved by covering the entire floor with a plain material, linoleum, or terra cotta.

"Most people like to show the beautiful hard woods and attractive finish of waxed or oiled floors. They use rugs that leave a border of polished wood around the room, or small "scatter" rugs that can be moved when the furniture is rearranged. Rugs of some sort protect the hardwood floors from wear and tear. In old houses with old floors, they cover up embarrassing defects.

"Then again, rugs add warmth, and make the floors more comfortable to walk on. I always think," Miss Viemont says, "that they deaden sounds to a considerable extent,- certainly a stair runner does. I suppose we are quick to notice footsteps, and furniture being moved, when the whole family spends more time indoors.

"The rugs are definitely part of the decorative scheme of one's rooms, and so they should harmonize with other furnishings, or provide a suitable background for them." Miss Viemont gives an interesting rule about the smaller sized rugs -- they should always lie parallel to the lines of the room or to the larger pieces of furniture. One of the advantages of smaller rugs is apparent when they have to be cleaned- they are easier to lift and handle than a room-sized rug. But in choosing them, Miss Viemont warns the housewife that they ought to be large enough to look like rugs and not like scattered postage stamps.

When it comes to deciding on the kind of rugs to buy, the choice is very wide. The final selection is determined not only by what you want to spend, or by color or weave or size, but by appropriateness. There are grass and fiber rugs and mattings, for example, which are suitable for some uses- on porches or even in some of the bed-rooms, while the more formal rooms need substantial looking, long-wearing rugs that go with living-room or dining-room furniture.



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Floor coverings of good quality that will stand a lot of wear are a real economy in the long run. It is also important to choose somewhat neutral colors and inconspicuous designs or the so-called texture patterns. Absolutely plain rugs in sturdy flat weaves and soft colors, such as one finds in the plain color "broadloom" rugs of various kinds make artistic backgrounds. Some of them show dust and footprints more than others, so it is well to test this point in the store by walking across a plain rug before buying it.

By the way, the term "broadloom" does not refer to a type of rug but to the width of the loom. Wide carpets and rugs used to be made by seaming together several strips of 27 inch fabric such as Wilton, Velvet, or Axminster carpeting. For some years not it has been possible to buy seamless "broadlooms" in various widths, and also some of the American reproductions of oriental patterned rugs. In plain colors these broadlooms can be bought to suit the shape of a room. Frieze type broadloom is intended to overcome or lessen footprinting. The same effect is often obtained by using two slightly different shades of yarn instead of twisting some yarns more tightly than others.

Sometimes two rooms open on each other or a room opens toward a hall or stairway, in such a way that matching floor covering should be used. Since plain "broadlooms" come in different widths, this need can be easily met.

A patterned rug, whatever its kind, must be carefully chosen. If the colors are pleasing it may go very well in a room with plain walls, plain draperies and upholstery, but in a room where these furnishings are figured, a patterned rug gives a feeling of confusion.

Another kind of patterned rug deserves a word. It's made by our own Navajo Indians in the Southwest, of sturdy woven wool, usually with bold geometric designs which suit modernistic furniture. I'm told that the U. S. Department of Agriculture has studied the most desirable breeds of sheep for producing the special wool that is used for Navajo blankets and rugs, and the demand for them is steadily growing.

In many states farm women have continued the old home industry of making rag rugs on looms, and hooked rugs on frames. Your home demonstration agent doubtless knows of women who add to their incomes by making such rugs. Hooked rugs made by country women are often dyed with beautiful vegetable colors. Some of the farm women will follow a customer's design and use colors ordered to harmonize with a particular room.

You can make some small bed-room and bath-room mats yourself very easily, by cutting cotton rags into strips about an inch wide, sewing them together, and crocheting or braiding the strips into long flat strands. Then you sew these strands by their edges, round and round, into oval or circular rugs. Do not make them too large or they may not lie flat.

Time's up, and I haven't said a word about linoleum floor coverings. We'll have to save that topic for another day.

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